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ABSTRACT

THIS PAMPHLET PRESENTS A RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY OF LATIN DURING A PERIOD IN WHICH THE RELEVANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IS BEING QUESTIONED. OBSERVATIONS ON THE VALUE OF LANGUAGE AWARENESS, HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUND JUDGMENT SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS THAT THE AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE AND CURRICULUM PLANNERS CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE TEACHING OF LATIN. (RL)

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THE ROLE OF LATIN IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

Prepared by the

Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education
California State Department of Education

In cooperation with

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Max Rafferty—Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento 1969

PREFACE

The California State Department of Education in cooperation with the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages is sending this pamphlet to educators to reaffirm the relevance of foreign language study, in this instance Latin.

Latin has held its place in school curriculum as an elective along with modern foreign languages because of its intrinsic worth.

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THE POSITION OF THE COUNCIL

The National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages endorses and encourages the teaching of Latin in American schools.

The rationale offered for Latin is essentially the same as that for the modern languages; through the study of a foreign language the monocultural and monolingual individual expands the boundaries of his own relatively narrow world to circumscribe a world which is at once more cosmopolitan. It is this very fact of foreign language study which makes languages crucial to the humanities.

Yet the continuing value of Latin to today's curriculum rests in its uniqueness. Latin presents the student an opportunity to develop a sense of the significant past by coming into direct contact with the Roman world. The late William Riley Parker, Distinguised Service Professor of English at Indiana University, said: "To live intellectually only in one's own time is as provincial and misleading as to live intellectually only in one's own culture." The importance of the past from which all Western civilization has evolved is self-evident.

That Latin differs in its grammar

from most languages commonly taught in our schools--even radically in the case of English--illustrates again the unique contribution this ancient language can make. Since Latin is one of the highly inflected languages, its contrast with English is especially sharp. The potential of Latin to create general linguistic concepts within the speaker of English makes it an ideal instrument for developing a deeper understanding of language *per se*.

As a means of building an historical perspective, of developing linguistic concepts, of creating a sense of judgment based on understanding of the past, Latin remains unsurpassed.

Although benefits do accrue from even a brief encounter with a foreign language, it is generally recognized that language competence results from extended sequences of study. The values of the study of Latin outlined here assume that a person will have the opportunity to pursue his study for three to six years.

Multi-sensory methods and materials especially suited to the interests, needs, and abilities of secondary students can make the teaching of Latin more meaningful than using a

traditional approach at these levels.

As modern languages move on the educational spectrum into the elementary and junior high schools, the number of youngsters studying two or more languages becomes increasingly widespread. There is justification to encourage the student who has begun a modern language at an early age to add Latin during his junior high school years.

The Council urges educators to reassess the values of Latin to the curriculum. The continuing decrease of Latin enrollments in the schools is alarming to many. This decrease can most readily be attributed to the small number of Latin teachers being prepared by colleges and universities; retirement of the Latin teacher sometimes means dropping Latin from the curriculum.

The Council encourages the American Classical League in its efforts toward developing standards for teacher education in Latin and disseminating information about new methods and materials in the teaching of Latin. Latin teachers and their modern foreign language colleagues realize that the value of any foreign language study is, in the final analysis, directly dependent upon the effectiveness of their teaching.

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